

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-15

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CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

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SUBJ: CHUQUICAMATA: MORE DETENTIONS AS NEGOTIATIONS RESUME

REF: SANTIAGO 6704

1. SUMMARY: THE NUMBER OF PERSONS DETAINED FOR ALLEGED SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES IN CLAAMA AND CHUQUICAMATA IS NOW 49. MAY APPEAR TO BE CHRISTIAN DECOMCRATS (PDC) BUT THE MARXIST PARTIES ARE ALSO REPRESENTED. THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR SEPTEMBER 7 REPEATED CHARGES THAT THE POLITICAL PARTIES ARE BEHIND THESE AND OTHER RECENT DISTRUBANCES. COPPER WORKER LEADERS HELD A FIRST, REPORTEDLY NOT ENCOURAGING, MEETING WITH CODELCO MANAGEMENT SEPTEMBER 8 ON OUTSTANDING ECONOMIC ISSUES. FINANCE MINISTER DE CASTRO PLAYED DOWN THE LIKELIHOOD OF SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC GAINS AT A PRESS CONFERENCE SEPTEMBER 7. AS APPARENT CONCILIATORY GESTURES CODELCO IS MAKING LOANS TO SOME WORKERS AND WILL MAKE ADVANCE PAYMENT OF PART OF THE ANNUAL BONUS. END SUMMARY

2. TEN OF THE 13 PERSONS ARRESTED AUGUST 31 REMAIN IN DETENTION; SECURITY FORCES IN CALAMA AND CHUQUICAMATA
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ARRESTED AN ADDITIONAL 22 PERSONS SEPTEMBER 6/7 AND 17 MORE PERSONS SEPTEMBER 7/8 -- MAKING A CURRENT TOTAL IN CUSTODY OF 49. THOSE ARRESTED IN THE LAST FEW DAYS APPEAR TO INCLUDE A NUMBER WHO ARE NOT EMPLOYEES OF CODELCO AND, TO THE EXTENT PARTY IDENTIFICATION IS EVIDENT, APPEAR TO BE AMIXTURE OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, COMMUNISTS AND SOCIALISTS. ONE OF THOSE DETAINED IS CESAREO CASTILLO --

A PDC GOVERNOR DURING THE FREI PERIOD. THOSE ARRESTED ARE ACCUSED OF FOMENTING LABOR UNREST AND DISTRIBUTING SUBVERSIVE PAMPHLETS. THERE HAS BEEN NO INDICATION AS YET WHAT LEGAL ACTION, IF ANY, THE GOC INTENDS.

3. INTERIOR MINISTER FERNANDEZ AT A PRESS CONFERENCE SEPTEMBER 7 REPEATED GOC CHARGES THAT THE LABOR UNREST AT CHUQUICAMATA AND ELSEWHERE IS BEING DIRECTED BY THE POLITICAL PARTIES. FERNANDEZ DIRECTED HIS FIRE PRIMARILY AT THE PDC AND THE COMMUNISTS AND REFERRED PRINCIPALLY TO THE SITUATION AT CHUQUICAMATA. COPPER WORKERS AT THE EL SALVADOR MINE HAVE ALSO BEEN CARRYING OUT A NO-LUNCH PROTEST BUT HAVE RECEIVED NO PRESS ATTENTION AND THERE HAS BEEN NO GOC CRACKDOWN AS YET. DURING THE PAST THREE DAYS A REPORTED ONE-THIRD OF THE LABOR FORCE AT THE HUACHIPATO STEEL MILL HAS ALSO CONDUCTED A NO-LUNCH PROTEST.

4. COPPER WORKERS LEADERS ARE BACK IN SANTIAGO TO RESUME NEGOTIATIONS ON THE ECONOMIC ISSUES THAT SPARKED THE PROTEST MOVEMENT AT CHUQUICAMATA. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD BY ONE OF THE LEADERS THAT THEY HAD GREAT DIFFICULTY PINNING DOWN THE CODELCO MANAGEMENT TO A MEETING TIME BUT DID FINALLY MEET WITH CODELCO PRESIDENT URBINA THE MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 8. THE LABOR LEADER SOURCE SAYS THAT THE MEETING DID NOT GO WELL AND THAT URBINA TOOK A HARDLINE ON POSSIBLE ECONOMIC CONCESSIONS. IT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HAS BEEN GENERALLY UNDERSTOOD HERE THAT WAGE INCREASES DEPEND UPON AGREEMENT BY FINANCE MINISTER DE CASTRO. IN A PRESS CONFERENCE SEPTEMBER 7 DE CASTRO ARGUED THAT COPPER WORKERS ARE ALREADY AMONG THE BEST PAID CHILEAN WORKERS AND THAT THE COPPER MINES AND THEIR PROFITS BELONG TO ALL CHILEANS, NOT SIMPLY TO THE WORKERS.

5. APPARENTLY, IN AN EFFORT TO REDUCE LABOR PRESSURE AT CHUQUICAMATA, CODELCO HAS IN RECENT DAYS AGREED TO ADVANCE ALL WORKERS 5,000 PESOS OF THEIR ANNUAL BONUS AND TO PROVIDE LOANS TO WORKERS WHO ARE BEHIND IN THEIR PAYMENTS ON GOVERNMENT BUILT HOUSING. THE SIX WORKERS FIRED IN LATE AUGUST HAVE BEEN FORMALLY REINSTATED.

6. COMMENT: THE GOVERNMENT IS PROBABLY CORRECT THAT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC, COMMUNIST AND PERHAPS OTHER PROSCRIBED POLITICAL PARTIES ARE ACTIVE IN THE CHUQUICAMATA DISPUTE. IT IS NOT CORRECT IN ASCRIBING LABOR UNREST THERE ENTIRELY OR EVEN PRIMARILY TO SUCH POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT. THE APPARENT UNWILLINGNESS OF THE GOC TO ENTER INTO SERIOUS ECONOMIC DISCUSSIONS WITH LABOR LEADERS IS NOT A GOOD SIGN FOR AN EARLY, PEACEFUL END

TO THE PRESENT DIFFICULTIES.
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